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Landfill cleanup causes concerns

By Lisa Lovelace-Mann

Peter Jeantet Reporter

With the start of the Skinner Landfill cleanup overdue and ready to begin any day, several concerns — some large and some small — about the cleanup have been expressed. And no one seems to be more concerned than CLEAN, a local environmental group.

Ruth Hauer, a member of CLEAN, said that recent meetings the group has had with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) representatives have done nothing to lessen their concerns — and have, in some ways, made them worse.

Her primary concern is that their interpretation of the original Record of Decision from the EPA mandates that there be a northern wall to block water from getting to the contaminated site off Cincinnati-Dayton Road, known as the "sherry wall." The EPA says the wall is optional, and it is not being included in the current plan.

Hauer also expressed concern about the type of material the cap (which will cover the contaminated area) is being made of, calling it "an experimental textile" and "extremely irresponsible."

"This cleanup does not protect public health," she said. "We wanted a cleanup that was safe and thorough cleanup that everyone was happy with, and they have reneged on the deal."

People of this community are under the erroneous assumption that the public health is being taken care of," she said. "It's a witcher's brew under there (the contaminated area) and anything could happen, but it doesn't seem like anyone is trying to protect us. What good is the EPA, anyway?"

She said that when she, and others, have expressed their concerns to the EPA, they were more responsive. "They basically told us to eat dirt," she said.

She said that members of CLEAN are doing all they can to change the cleanup plan, though she said it could be too late to make much difference. They are staging a letter-writing campaign to several elected officials, including U.S. Rep. John Boehner. "We're talking to anyone who will listen," Hauer said.

Union Township Administrator Dave Gully said that though he shares some of Hauer's concerns, he has faith in the EPA, and its ability to do its job.

"Their (EPA's) interpretation of the sherry wall is that it's an option," he said. "It's not the township's responsibility to interpret the Record of Decision, the EPA does that."

"We have no authority — only opinion. We have expressed our concerns to the EPA about the sherry wall, but we know that they disagree. That's just the way it is."

He said that the township has "a number of outstanding issues" with the cleanup plan, most of which revolve around the public safety and emergency response plan.

"We have been assured by the EPA that the cleanup won't start until the issues are resolved," he said. "We're confident that they're taking it seriously and mean what they say."

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LETTERS TO THE
EDITOR

Area deserves remedy

Since Feb. 1, CLEAN has met with U.S. EPA four times. The issue is that EPA and the PRPs (pollutants) have cut down the cleanup of the Skinner Landfill Superfund Site (a hazardous waste dump) in West Chester.

The cut-down cleanup is not the "selected remedy" that EPA designated and justified in its Record of Decision for the Skinner Site, after numerous meetings with CLEAN, other organizations, public officials, and hundreds of residents. The cut-down cleanup will not protect public health, air quality, water

quality or local property values.

The Skinner Site is located on Cincinnati-Dayton Road, across from Union Elementary School. About 750 children attend that school. About 7,000 people live or work within three miles of the Skinner Site. The "selected remedy" included:

1. A seven-layered RCRA cap, to minimize the infiltration of water from precipitation through contaminated wastes in the lagoon and landfill;

2. Downgradient groundwater controls, to capture, intercept and treat contaminated groundwater;

3. Upgradient groundwater controls, to prevent groundwater from coming into contact with contaminated wastes;

4. Soil Vapor Extraction, if feasible. SVE would remove volatile organic chemical vapors and air from the soil and treat them prior to discharge to the atmosphere;

5. Institutional controls, to limit the future use of areas where remedial construction occurred, such as the capped area;

6. Monitoring of groundwater, surface water, soil and subsurface samples, and monitoring for potential migration of Dense, Non-Aqueous-Phase Liquid contamination (e.g., creosote) from the site;

7. Monitoring of all media during the remedial construction.

8. Additional investigation of the northeast corner of the site and area along Skinner Creek.

The cap has been reduced, and an experimental textile will be used. Experimenting with the cap at the Skinner Site is irresponsible.

Vents in the cap will allow explosive gases (e.g., methane) and toxic chemical vapors (e.g., benzene) to escape into the air people breathe at the school, the post office, etc.

There will be no air pollution control devices on the vents. That does nothing to protect public health, air quality or local property values.

The upgradient groundwater controls have been eliminated.

Groundwater will continue to extract the waste, become contaminated and possibly migrate off the site via fractures in the bedrock, sand/gravel seams, etc.

On-site groundwater treatment has been eliminated. Contaminated groundwater will be discharged to Butler County's Upper Mill Creek sewage treatment plant.

The monitoring is a joke.

This cut-down cleanup is not a cost protecting the public health, the environment or local property values. It's about saving the PRPs' money and scamming the public.

This community deserves the selected remedy and the protection that remedy would provide.

Beth R. Hauser
CLEAN, Inc.

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